

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #55, August 26, 2004 • a free paper for free people

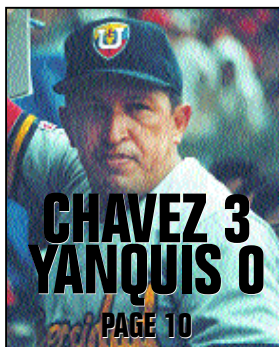
THEY'RE HERE!



Detail from Pieter Bruegel's "Triumph of Death"

**NEW YORKERS
TALK BACK
TO BUSH**

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**CHAVEZ 3
YANQUIS 0**

PAGE 10



Fighting the 4th World War:

Filmmaker Rick Rowley talks world rebellion
& the new art of agit-propumentary, P.7

For open-publishing
coverage of the
RNC protests:

nyc.indymedia.org



NEW YORK CITY INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

Phone:
212.684.8112

Email:
imc-nyc-print@indymedia.org

Web:
NYC: www.nyc.indymedia.org
GLOBAL: www.indymedia.org

Office and Mail:
NYC Independent Media Center
34 E. 29th St. 2nd Floor
NY, NY 10016

WHAT IS INDYMEDIA?

With autonomous chapters in more than 100 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to illuminate and analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Independent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Independent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

VOLUNTEER STAFF:

Chris Anderson, Silvia Arana, Bennett Baumer, Jed Brandt, Mike Burke, Leigh Ann Caldwell, Ellen Davidson, Christopher Day, Shea Dean, Ryan Dunsmuir, Miguel Erb, Alley Ernst, Aleya Feldman, Chris Fleisher, Mike Flugenock, Katalen V. Foisy, Alfredo Garzon, Neela Ghoshal, Lauren Giambrone, A.K. Gupta, Andy Harris, Irina Ivanova, Adam Louie, Ashley Kidd, Amelia H. Krales, F. Timothy Martin, Yoni Mishal, Nik Moore, Lydia Neri, Ana Nogueira, Jennifer Nordstrom, Lina Pallotta, Donald Paneth, Kate Perkins, Mark Pickens, James Powell, Derg Quiggle, Sam Rasiotis, Frank Reynoso, Erica Sackin, Ann Schneider, Catriona Stuart, Sarah Stuteville, Suzy Subways, John Tarleton, Ishaan Tharoor, Rhianna Tyson, Michael Ulrich, Matthew Wasserman

COMMUNITY CALENDAR august



fredaskew.com

FOR MORE EVENTS, SEE: RNCGUIDE.COM

SAT AUG 28

11:00 a.m.
MARCH AND RALLY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS
(Planned Parenthood)
Location: Assemble in Cadman Plaza, march across Brooklyn Bridge, rally at City Hall

Noon - 6:00 p.m.
POLITICAL FESTIVAL: A GREENER WORLD IS POSSIBLE (Green Party)
Location: Assemble in Washington Square Park

10:00 a.m.
RALLY FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE (Middle East Peace Coalition, ANSWER)
Location: Assemble at 7th Ave. & 14th St.

SUN AUG 29

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
FEEDER RALLY / MARCH (Not In Our Name)
Location: Union Square Park, then move to UFPJ assembly area

10:00 a.m.
WOMEN'S PEACE RALLY AND MARCH (Code Pink)
Location: Madison Square Park, 23rd St. and Fifth Ave., then move to UFPJ assembly area

12:00 p.m.
MARCH AND RALLY FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE
(United for Peace and Justice)
Location: Assemble at Seventh Ave. & 14th St., then march past Madison Square Garden; rally location contested

MON AUG 30

11:00 a.m.
MARCH AND RALLY AGAINST ROCKEFELLER LAWS AND AIDS (Still We Rise Coalition, New York Civil Liberties Union)
Location: Union Square / Madison Square Garden

1:00 - 4:00 p.m.
RALLY DURING PLAZA HOTEL CONVENTION EVENT (Jews for Racial and Economic Justice)
Location: Plaza Hotel

4:00 p.m.
RALLY FOR OUR LIVES (Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign)
Location: Assemble in front of the United Nations; march through Times Square to Madison Square Garden

WED SEPT 1

8:15 a.m.
THE LINE (A Coalition of Arts and Labor Organizations)
Location: Sidewalks of Broadway from Wall Street to Madison Square Garden

4:00 p.m.
LABOR RALLY (New York City Central Labor Council)
Location: Assemble at 8th Ave. & 30th St. (enter on 23rd St.)

7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
RALLY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS (National Organization for Women)
Location: Central Park, East Meadow

THU SEPT 2

2:00 p.m.
MARCH AND RALLY FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND JUSTICE
(Artist and Activist United for Peace Coalition)
Location: Assemble on 126th St. behind Harlem State Office Building, march up Frederick Douglass Blvd., rally near 150th St.

Fall Reporting Workshop Series

Interested in journalism but not sure how start?

The Independent will continue its popular community reporting workshop series on back-to-back Saturdays later this fall.

We will explore the basics of developing news and human interest stories, lead writing, interviewing, research and much more.

For more information, email indymworkshop@yahoo.com or call 212-684-8112.

THE PEOPLE'S LAWYER

The National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Committee will be out in full force before, during and after the RNC week.

Here is our advice to you:

Before the demo, write the NLG hotline on your wrist or ankle. It is (212) 679-6018.

In case you are arrested, carry quarters and a phone card for a telephone call in jail. Have on your photo ID with a good address. Do not carry ID's with differing addresses. Carry some granola bars and water with you. Don't carry anything you don't want the police to have.

If you are stopped by the police, ask, "Am I free to go?" If the officer says yes, say nothing and walk away. Do not run. If you are arrested by the police, state in a loud voice, "I am going to remain silent. I would like to speak to a lawyer." Repeat this to any officer who asks you questions after being told you are not free to go.

Remember that is perfectly legal for the police to lie to you to get you to talk. The only information you must give is your name. Don't be tricked! Silence

is the best policy, and giving a false name could be a crime.

Do not speak to anyone other than your lawyer about the circumstances of your arrest, even other prisoners, family and friends. If you are being held for arraignment, you should consider allowing yourself to be photographed and fingerprinted because it will speed up your release. You should also be prepared to give your address, birthdate and birthplace if you want to get out on no or low bail.

If you have no outstanding warrants, the police may give you a Desk Appearance Ticket (DAT) and release you, giving you a later date to return to court.

The police must have a legal basis under the Fourth Amendment to search you, your car or your belongings. If the police start to search your bag or pat down the outside of your clothing, state "I do not consent to this search" and remain silent. If they continue to search, stay calm and don't resist. Remember the officer's name and badge number and call a lawyer.

If you are not a U.S. citizen, there are greater risks involved because you do not have full political rights. You must carry your immigration papers such as "green card", I-94, or work authorization with you. If you go to a demonstration, carry the name and telephone number of an immigration lawyer who will take your calls.

Visit the Mass Defense Committee's website at www.nlg.org/rnc.html for more information.



THE MEDICAL ACTIVISTS OF NY

are offering a hotline to allow patients and medics to contact us about injuries and illness that they encounter, so that we can track these events and assist in linking individuals to appropriate follow-up care.

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fever
trouble breathing
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injury
police violence
unusual or ongoing illness

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You do not have to leave your name or any identifying information; however, if you would like assistance in finding further care, please leave us a way to contact you.

POLS SELL OUT COMMUNITY GARDENS FOR CAMPAIGN CASH

SEEING GREEN

HANGING ON: Raymond Rodriguez (left) enjoys the fresh vegetables at Latinos Unidos Garden on 158th and Park in the South Bronx. (Right) Rodriguez plays guitar on the steps of the *casita* located in the middle of the garden while his neighbor Valentina Silva looks on.

PHOTOS: SARA DEALOA

BY CHRIS ANDERSON & JOHN TARLETON

Raymond Rodriguez walks across the street every day from his sixth-floor apartment in a South Bronx housing project to the Latinos Unidos Garden. For the retired factory worker, the 50-by-30-foot garden plot is a place to rest in the shade, strum his guitar, pass time with friends, celebrate the birthdays of neighborhood children, or watch his peppers and his tomatoes grow. Within a few months, he expects the city to demolish the garden.

"The city is going to take everything," he says. "What can you do?"

"The politicians aren't doing nothing," adds his friend Luis Rodriguez, who has had five gardens destroyed by the city over the past 20 years. "They've made a lot of promises, but they've never done anything."

For Peter Fine and Marc Altheim, another garden Madison Square Garden is the place to be later this month. Fine and Altheim are top executives at the Atlantic Development Group, which has won the rights to build private housing on land in the South Bronx that currently houses several community gardens, including Latinos Unidos. Atlantic Development is also among the 77 major donors to the New York Host Committee, which, led by Mayor Bloomberg, is bankrolling the 2004 Republican National Convention with \$64 million in unrestricted

private contributions.

Fine and Altheim have been bipartisan in their political contributions.

In mid-June 2004, the two executives, with their wives, donated \$5,000 each to the state senate campaign of Democrat Jose M. Serrano. Two weeks later, on June 30, Community Board 2 in the Bronx voted to allow Atlantic to develop land in the Melrose Commons neighborhood that currently houses several community gardens. Serrano, a New York City councilman for District 17, appointed the key members of Community Board 2 involved in the development vote. The \$20,000 contributed by Fine, Altheim, and their wives constitutes almost half the total big-money donations raised by Serrano's campaign last quarter.

The chain of events surrounding the latest development moves in the Bronx highlights

the enormous power wielded by real estate speculators within poor communities of color that are going through rapid gentrification. Atlantic Development Group, one of the key public housing developers in the South Bronx, has been a consistent Serrano patron throughout his political career. Altheim and Fine donated \$10,000 to Serrano's City Council campaign in 2002.

"Everybody is turning their back on people who have done something positive," says Aresh Javadi of the More Gardens Coalition, which works with neighborhood residents to preserve community gardens. "If you don't have the money, you don't have the power."

More Gardens has worked with local authorities and neighborhood groups over the past year to fashion a compromise that would preserve 11 of Melrose's remaining 17 community gardens, some of which date back to the 1980s and host a number of cultural activities and programs for children. Javadi says these efforts have been scuttled by Serrano. While gardens activists try to keep the bulldozers at bay, Raymond Rodriguez is determined to make the most of his remaining time at Latinos Unidos.

"I'll be here every day," he says. Pointing to the chain-link fence that borders the garden, he adds, "When the City says goodbye, I'll go over to the street and be there."

For more info, see moregardens.org

RNC FUNDRAISERS

A WHO'S WHO

A recent report issued by the Campaign Finance Institute argues that the unrestricted private funding of political conventions has turned these quadrennial gatherings into lavish parties swimming in corporate patronage. Private and corporate contributions to the 2004 RNC will outnumber public financing by 333 percent. Many of the key fundraisers that helped bring the RNC to New York have other connections to the Big Apple. Here are a few of them.

MICHAEL BLOOMBERG

New York's mayor. Although Bloomberg has spent \$5 million of his own money to help finance the RNC, he also has the ultimate authority over protests surrounding the convention.

GEORGE PATAKI

Governor of New York State and key fundraiser for the 2004 RNC. Pataki also is a "Bush Ranger" — named for people who personally raise more than \$200,000 for W's re-election campaign.

ROLAND W. BETTS

A fraternity brother of George W. Bush and the director of the Lower Manhattan Development Corp. (which is overseeing redevelopment of Ground Zero).

HENRY PAULSON

CEO of Goldman Sachs, a New York City-based investment company that overvalued Enron's stocks to encourage its sale, more than likely in exchange for a commission.

NEW YORK TIMES CO.

Corporation that runs the largest and most powerful newspaper in New York, supposedly an "unbiased" source of news. The company has been officially thanked by the NY Host Committee after helping to arrange trips to Broadway shows for thousands of RNC delegates.

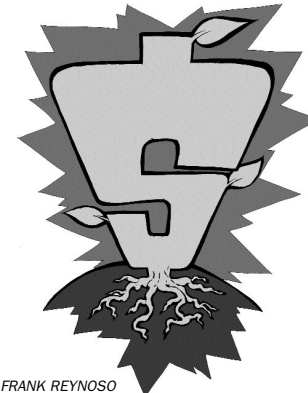
WILLIAM RUDIN

Chairman of the Association for a Better New York, a nonprofit that is gentrifying NYC to make it safe for future Republican conventions. Rudin is also a real estate tycoon, providing other tycoons with state-of-the-art offices.

SANFORD WEILL

CEO of Citigroup, the largest and most powerful US-based bank holding company. Citigroup has lobbied successfully to deregulate the banking industry, and has also been implicated in numerous predatory lending schemes, offering high-cost loans that impact thousands of New Yorkers.

More donors are profiled online at <http://rncnotwelcome.org/rncfundraisers.html>



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A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

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172 Allen St.
Times Up
49 E. Houston St.
Lotus Café
Clinton & Stanton Sts.
Key Foods
Ave. A & E. 4th St.
May Day Books at Theater for the New City
155 First Ave. (btw 9th & 10th)
Kim's Video
3rd Ave. & St. Marks Pl.
Housing Works
126 Crosby St.
LGBT Center
213 W. 13th St.

14TH TO 96TH ST.

Revolution Books
9 W. 19th St.
Chelsea Sq. Diner
23rd St. & 9th Ave.

Second Wave Laundrocenr

55th St. & 9th Ave.
Ziggies
94th St. & 2nd Ave.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

Labyrinth Books
536 W. 112th St.
96th St. Library
112 E. 96th St.
Kim's Books
113th St. & Broadway
Strictly Roots Restaurant
123rd & Adam Clayton Powell
Green Chimneys
450 W. 145th St.
Coogan's Bar
169th St. & Broadway
Fort Washington Bakery & Deli
808 W. 181 St.
Jumpin' Jalapenos
W. 207th St. (Between B'way & Vermillia)
Cafe Seven
7 Henshaw St.

BROOKLYN

Flatbush Library
22 Linden Blvd.
Cortelyou Library
1305 Cortelyou Rd.
Tillie's of Brooklyn
248 Dekalb Ave.
Green Apple Café
110 Dekalb Ave.
Marquet Patisserie
680 Fulton St.
Halcyon
227 Smith St.
Freddy's Bar and Backroom
Dean St. & 6th Ave.
BAM
30 Lafayette Ave.
Community Book Store
7th Ave. & Carroll Sts.
Tea Lounge
Union St. @ 7th Ave.

Atlantis Super Laundry Center

472 Atlantic Ave.
Photoplay Video
933 Manhattan Ave.
Clovis Books
4th St. & N. Bedford Ave.
Jane Doe Books
93 Montrose Ave.
Make the Road by Walking
301 Grove St.

QUEENS

Sunnyside Library
43-06 Greenpoint Ave.
East Elmhurst Library
95-06 Astoria Blvd.
Jackson Heights Library
35-51 81 St.
Friend's Tavern
78-11 Roosevelt Ave.
Langston Hughes Library
100-01 Northern Blvd.
Café Aubergine
49-22 Skillman Ave.

Sunnyside Library

43-06 Greenpoint Ave.

BRONX

Bronx Museum
165th St. & Grand Concourse
The Point
940 Garrison Ave.

JERSEY CITY

Five Corners Public Library
678 Newark Ave.
Downtown Public Library
472 Jersey Ave.
Ground Coffee Shop
530 Jersey Ave.

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Z

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For 17 years, **Z Magazine** has published a monthly magazine free of paid advertising and composed of critical thinking on political, cultural, social, and economic life in the U.S., as well as regular reporting on activist efforts and alternative visions for a better future. In addition to providing information and analysis, **Z Magazine** offers a forum for the best political cartoons around. Hundreds of left writers, journalists, teachers, and activists have found a home in **Z**, even when boycotted by the mainstream. Our contributors have included Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, Edward S. Herman, Yves Engler, William Blum, Sonali Kholhatkar, Howard Zinn, Leslie Cagan, Manning Marable and scores of others.

Since the dawn of the web, **ZNet** (www.zmag.org), **Z Magazine's** website, has offered a community of people committed to changing the world. Today, **ZNet** offers participatory forums, "hot-spot" watch areas, instructional courses, multiple translations, pen pals, hundreds of recent articles, thousands of archived articles, and a daily commentary program featuring writers from around the world.

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**The Spirit of
Resistance LIVES!**

activism interview politics humor analysis review reporting culture commentary

CRIMINALIZING TENANTS

BLOOMBERG ROLLS OUT 'OPERATION SAFE HOUSING'

By NELL GEISER

People who have been arrested – not even convicted – on drug charges will be banned from setting foot on public-housing property under a new city policy going into effect this September.

The program, Operation Safe Housing, will rely on a photo database of people arrested for felony drug offenses. Queens will be the first borough to implement it.

"We're always trying to do new things," said Mayor Bloomberg when announcing the program on June 24. The New York Civil Liberties Union calls Operation Safe Housing "an invitation to discrimination and abuse."

Technically, Operation Safe Housing simply enforces existing laws more stringently. Andy Williams, a staff attorney at Bronx Defenders, notes that the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) already handles all arrests on its property as grounds for eviction or exclusion. Under the 1998 Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, public housing authorities can evict tenants if residents or guests are convicted of drug offenses. (The law is better known for its provision that public housing tenants who are not employed or elderly must perform eight hours of community service a month.)

"It may be a kid who is picked up in a hallway," Williams says. "He's never been arrested before, he's certainly not dealing drugs, he maybe has one joint on him. And his family still faces termination proceedings and gets evicted." Often after an arrest, in order for a family to get probation rather than face eviction, they are forced to sign an agreement excluding the offending relative. If that person comes back to the apartment, the whole family is kicked out.

Legal Aid attorney Judith Goldiner says the program "criminalizes people who have been arrested and who have not been convicted of anything and puts them in a position where they can't visit their families – their mothers, their wives, their children, their sisters, their brothers – and it infringes on the rights of those family members who have done nothing wrong and need help from the people who have been banned." Many of her clients, she says,

have been arrested for being in the wrong place at the wrong time when drug-sniffing dogs were brought to their buildings.

"We do believe it's legal," NYCHA spokesperson Howard Marder responds. "We do have a process for people to question their exclusion from a particular building. There is due process." If an individual is acquitted, his or her name is supposed to be taken out of the database, and if a convicted felon has served time in prison, he or she can appeal the ban.

Crime does occur on public housing property at a disproportionate rate. Only 5 percent of the city's population – 420,000 people – live in public housing, but last year, 11 percent of the city's rapes and murders and 16 percent of shootings took place in housing projects.

Some people say NYCHA's failure to maintain routine security is part of the problem. In June, a City Council report found that intruders could get into almost half of public housing buildings without a key, because of broken locks and other safety failures. "The core problem is the decline of federal funding both for maintenance and capital," says Victor Bach of the nonprofit Community Service Society.

Bach suggests that the housing authority is looking to the police department to implement draconian measures like Operation Safe Housing because of the erosion of federal housing resources; NYCHA is facing a \$300 million deficit caused by massive federal funding cuts. Tenants' rights activists have been pushing for adequate allocations, but they are up against a president who "has targeted housing as a major area to slash in order to reduce the deficit that his administration created through tax cuts," says Bach. The Bush Administration has stripped funding for a drug-elimination program that paid for housing police, security cameras, tenant patrols, and summer jobs for teenagers.

So what *would* make public housing safer in New York? "Repairs would be a good start," says Dave Powell, an organizer with the Metropolitan Council on Housing. "Senior citizens shouldn't be having to walk 20 stories up to their apartment. There are a lot of people living in horrible conditions that don't have to do with crime, except for a crime of the state."

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CNHPNow!



By Mike Burke

Iwant the economy back, open for business right away – banks, the stock market, everything tomorrow.”

Those were the words of President Bush on September 11, 2001, just hours after the Twin Towers collapsed (as recalled by his former terrorism czar, Richard Clarke, and echoed by ex-Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill).

The stock market wouldn't open for nearly another a week, but the President's comment on September 11 raises new questions about how much he understood what happened and his regard for the health and welfare of New Yorkers.

A new report by the Sierra Club, released

two weeks before the Republican National Convention, confirms that the Bush administration deliberately misled New Yorkers about the toxic nightmare at Ground Zero.

The report extensively examines how the Environmental Protection Agency downplayed health warnings, conducted incomplete tests and ignored key findings that should have raised red flags.

The Sierra Club notes:

- The government never told the public that federal employees with the Environmental Protection Agency and Health & Human Services working at 290 Broadway suffered physical ailments from the fallout.
- The Bush-appointed White House Council on Environmental Quality edited EPA com-

BREATHLESS AT GROUND ZERO: Police stand in front of the New York Stock Exchange Monday, Sept. 17, 2001, as workers return to the area for the first time since the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center. Smoke and dust still linger in the air from the attack that destroyed the Twin Towers. AP PHOTO/AMY SANCETTA

munications to remove any mention of health hazards. It also provided misleading data to senators regarding the extent of asbestos contamination in the area.

- The EPA used out-of-date tests to detect asbestos and failed to properly test for the very tiny and more hazardous airborne particles that are likely to result from a hot combustion. Jimmy Willis, a 9/11 rescue worker and assistant to the president for the Transport Workers Union, comments: "What EPA did was like using a colander with giant holes, and then saying, 'Look, there's no spaghetti.' It was a test to find nothing."
- Child asthma rates jumped in Chinatown after September 11, 2001.
- By September 27, 2001, the federal government had test results confirming that the WTC dust was as caustic as ammonia, and in some cases as caustic as drain cleaner. But the EPA never warned the public.

Most disturbingly, the Sierra Club warns that the Bush administration is planning to use the clean-up at Ground Zero as the standard for responding to future attacks. As part of this, Bush administration is eliminating OSHA's role of enforcing the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act at future national emergency sites.

The Sierra Club concludes: "Based on the experience at Ground Zero, the Bush administration's new policies would dramatically increase the health risks to Americans unfortunate enough to experience future national emergencies."

The full report on September 11 air toxins is online at www.sierraclub.com/groundzero.

IN BRIEF

SIX MILLION WORKERS TO LOSE OVERTIME PAY

Under new U.S. Department of Labor regulations, "millions of workers" could actually see their pay decrease, according to the Economic Policy Institute. While the Bush administration increased the cap for overtime eligibility for workers earning \$8,060, to \$23,660, it also allows for numerous reclassifications that could deny overtime eligibility to up to six million workers, unions and public interest groups say. The new rules, which went into effect Aug. 23, allow for team leaders to be redefined as "administrators" and low-level supervisors as "executives," exempting them from overtime pay even if their work consists of flipping burgers or stocking shelves. Also at risk for losing overtime pay are firefighters, police and nurses.

ELDERLY BLACK VOTERS TARGETED IN FLORIDA

State officials in central Florida are being accused of intimidating elderly black voters during a recent incident in Orlando. Armed state troopers went knocking door-to-door as part of what officials describe as an investigation into voter fraud during last March's mayoral election. But community leaders say that state officials were making a deliberate attempt to intimidate voters as part of an election-year tactic aimed to keep black voters away from the polls in November. A strong black turnout is considered crucial for Democrats to win the state in the upcoming presidential election. Florida's three black congressmen have called for a federal investigation.

REPUBLICAN CONGRESSMAN CONDEMNS IRAQ WAR

Despite his vote in favor of the war, Rep. Doug Bereuter (R-NE) broke ranks with his party and declared the U.S. military strike on Iraq a "mistake." Until early August, this senior conservative lawmaker served as vice-chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, a group that reviewed much of the Bush administration's pre-war intelligence. In a surprise four-page letter to his constituents, Bereuter sharply criticized Bush for what he called "a dangerous, costly mess," urging a full review of the "errors and failures" involved in the war and its aftermath. Bereuter left open the possibility that intelligence was manipulated to justify military action. Administration staffers have downplayed Bereuter's comments, and Rep. Roy LaHood (R-IL) suggested that Bereuter's comments were his response for having been passed over to lead the intelligence and foreign relations committees.

NEO-CONey Island



ART AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT came together at an event that took place on August 14, featuring groups of artists, musicians and performers in a rally against the Bush administration. To check out the art collective in charge, visit notanalternative.net.

PHOTOS: KATIE ORLINSKY



DROP TUITION
NOT BOMBS



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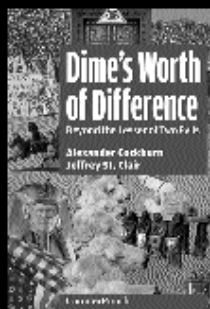
In the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Roy delivers this fiery critique on the "New American Empire" to a packed audience in New York City. Roy emphatically challenges Americans to reclaim democracy and resist the U.S. war machine.



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Tourists are pleasantly surprised when New Yorkers act as friendly and polite as the people back home in Mayberry. However, RNC delegates shouldn't expect our standard out-of-towner treatment. Like the hapless saps whose blood they sent to be spilled into Middle Eastern sands, they will be given intentionally incorrect directions to nonexistent places. Objects will be thrown in their direction. Children will call them obscene names. They will not be greeted as liberators.

NYC TO GOP: DROP DEAD

BY TED RALL

Well aware that it is barren soil for their party's anti-urban, anti-immigrant, anti-feminist, overtly racist ideology, Republican leaders have wisely avoided New York City as a convention site for the past 150 years. Even as the rest of America turns red, we New Yorkers remain as liberal as the people's republic of San Francisco: fewer than 18 percent of the citizens of New York's five boroughs (which include relatively conservative places like Staten Island) cast ballots for Bush/Cheney in 2000. But White House strategist Karl Rove sees the continued exploitation of September 11 as Bush's key to victory in November. RNC 2004 is being held a full month later than normal. The original plan was to have Bush shuttle between Madison Square Garden and Ground Zero for photo ops to coincide with the third anniversary of the September 11th attacks. Bush's visits to the Trade Center site were quietly canceled a few months back after 9/11 survivors expressed revulsion at the idea. But it was too late to change the date.

Anti-Republican sentiment is rising to a fever pitch here as the dog days tick down to the dreaded affair. A poll cited by the local ABC affiliate shows 83 percent of New Yorkers don't want their city to host the RNC. And many of them are planning to do something about it.

Rejecting ex-mayor Ed Koch's call to "make nice" with the party that used the deaths of 2,801 New Yorkers — most of them Democrats — for everything from tax cuts for the rich to building concentration camps at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib to invading Iraq to enrich Dick Cheney and his fellow Halliburton execs, some groups are encouraging liberal-minded New Yorkers to volunteer for the city's squad of official greeters. Creatively altered maps of streets and subways will be handed out to button-clad stupid white men. Other saboteurs wearing fake RNC T-shirts will direct them to parts of town where Bush's policies have hit hardest. Rumor has it that prostitutes suffering from sexually transmitted diseases will discourage the use of condoms with Republican customers.

Anywhere between 250,000 and 1,000,000 anti-Bush demonstrators are

expected to hit the streets of Manhattan, but the city and protest organizers can't agree on where to put them. Adding to the already combustible Chicago '68 vibe is a possible wildcat strike by city cops and firefighters. Strikebreaking policemen and private security personnel may be able to keep the protesters away from the convention hall. But Republicans who venture outside the Garden deserve the abuse ordinary New Yorkers will likely inflict upon them.

True, the administration eventually coughed up the \$20 billion aid package Bush promised the city after 9/11. But that sum — equal to the cost of occupying Iraq for four months — barely made up for such disaster-related expenses as police overtime, debris removal and rebuilding damaged subway stations and tunnels. New York's economy hasn't even begun to recover. Mayor Bloomberg, a Republican, opposes virtually every Bush administration decision concerning New York City. And New Yorkers good and true will be yelling at the Republicans to go back home.

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Living History

BY RHIANNA TYSON

At 85, Molly Klopot defies all stereotypes. She has not retired to Florida. She's just as far from the benign image of a Kerry-supporting Democrat as she is from the cookie-baking grandmother she might appear to strangers.

"I don't do cooking much," she says simply. Instead, this Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, resident of 35 years fills her days and evenings with political meetings, grassroots organizing and public education efforts. "I've been fighting for a long time," she says. "I must say it's a good way to live."

As chair of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's (WILPF) New York Metro office — and a member of the national steering committee of Not in Our Name — Molly, like most activists, is busy with preparations for the Republican National Convention.

"Isn't that the whole point?" she asks. "To resist, resist, resist!"

While some children are raised Jewish, Christian or Muslim, Molly was raised to be political. Born of Russian immigrant parents in 1919 and raised in the burgeoning industrial capital of Detroit, Molly grew up a middle-class girl immersed in working-class heroism. "Very early I remember going into the streets and collecting money for the starving miners in West Virginia," she recalls. "That was the beginning of the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]."



MOLLY KLOPOT, longtime labor & peace activist

Her life sounds like a reading out of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. As an awestruck adolescent, she watched a blood-soaked and beaten picketer — Elizabeth Gurly Flynn — rally the autoworkers during the strikes that formed the United Auto Workers (UAW). Years later in New York, Molly helped organize the first union of state, county and municipal workers.

At the beginning of World War II, Molly had to decide whether to go into the army or stay in Detroit, the city then known as "the arsenal of democracy." Following other Rosie Riverets, she worked at a Ford factory making armaments for the military. She was also a major union member-organizer.

"Ford needed workers," she explains, "but Ford wasn't hiring Negro women." As a UAW member, Molly was elected committee-woman, the first woman to ever be elected as a union representative there. "So we organized a picket line," she says, "not to stop people from going in

and doing their work but to publicize what was happening."

It worked. Ford began hiring black women. But Molly's organizing work wasn't finished. She organized a women's committee of workers to teach women about the benefits of unionism, established day care and security services and even threw parties with the USO.

Today, Molly's work comes mainly out of the Peace Pentagon down on Lafayette Street, where WILPF has an office. WILPF fights for racial justice and disarmament and against corporate power.

"I lived through McCarthyism and fascism," she said. "Mussolini defined fascism as corporate statism. Look at all the rights they're taking away! And then they're talking about would people be willing to spy on their neighbors."

While Molly sees the signs of fascism permeating our society, she also sees the signs of real change — for the better.

She urges her fellow activists to get creative. To Molly, this is the element that has been missing. "We need more agit-prop," she concludes. "Political satire. Political vaudeville. We have to integrate that a lot more."

Maybe it's the 85 years of small victories that keep her going and convinced that another world is indeed possible. "We didn't win anything without activism," she reminds us. "And no history is bloodier than labor history. And that's where we come from."



STILLS FROM THE MOVEMENT: From left, South Korean riot cops chase workers during general strike; two images of Zapatistas; anticapitalist protester in Quebec City.

Fighting the Fourth World War

Jed Brandt interviews filmmaker Rick Rowley about the global revolt revealed in his new film, *The Fourth World War*. After six sold-out weeks in San Francisco, it's finally hitting New York.

Indydependent: *What is the Fourth World War?*

Rick Rowley: We first heard the term from the Zapatistas in 1996. It's a conflict that transcends the logic of states. It is a war without a singular enemy or fixed battlefields. There are not two simple sides. It is a system at work everywhere violently reorganizing our lives.

In some places the system works with bullets and bombs, in others with hunger and neglect, in others it isolates us in terror and turns us into accomplices in this global violence. There is no longer any distinction between combatants and

non-combatants, no "outside" to this war. Our only choice is to stand with the men and women around the world who resist being annihilated in its violence.

At the start of the globe-trotting in the movie, it says "this is not a tour and we are not tour guides." What's that about?

Tourism participates in and depends on this capitalist logic of distance and alienation. It simulates and sells connection to some authentic other while keeping it all safely outside of ourselves and our borders.

The *Fourth World War* makes itself vulnerable to the world of

the other. It does not claim to penetrate an indigenous "heart of darkness," to condense and contain the truth of 500 years of struggle, but looks for points of resonance and connection. It asks viewers to allow themselves to be wounded and changed by the things they see and hear. It invites them to read themselves into this story as participants rather than observers.

Living inside the American bubble, the rest of the world feels unreal sometimes. Did you have an American audience in mind when you set out around the world?

We are only allowed to see people in Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan through the crosshairs of a military machine. We see the war shot from the noses of bombs. We hear it narrated by generals. We want the audience

to stand, for an instant, with children facing down tanks in the Jenin refugee camp and to feel, even for an instant, that their life is connected to the lives of people all around the world.

Sometimes it feels like the government oppresses everyone together, but we resist separately. Is there a feeling of global solidarity in the movements you documented?

There have been other moments of global uprising — 1968 saw the Tet offensive in Vietnam and uprisings in Algeria, Prague, Paris, Chicago, Mexico City and beyond. But there is something special about this moment. There is a self-consciously articulated feeling of connection in the street that feels new.

If you talk to a piquetero in Argentina about their struggle, they will mention the Zapatistas. The anti-privatization movements in South Africa send organizers to Argentina to share their experiences and strategies of struggle. In South Korea the labor movement studies movements in Latin America and Africa to help shape their resistance to neoliberalism. The Zapatistas have deep ties to the global justice movement in Europe and North America. And the Palestinian intifada is a part of our imaginary of struggle everywhere.

How did this film get made?

It would have been unimaginable at any other moment in history. It was produced in and through a global network of movements that has never existed before — movements that share a common language of resistance and a deep feeling of interconnection. Even though two of us shot 90% of the images in the film, it was only made possible by a network of independent media activists that numbers in the tens of thousands.

While many of the movements you profiled are involved in resistance, its note-worthy that you didn't include revolutionary movements, such as in Colombia and Nepal. Is there a reason you've side-stepped popular movements that are aiming to govern, not just resist?

The difference between some of the movements in the film and groups like the FARC or Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) is about their tactical relationship to the State. If

anything characterizes movements today, it is *anachrony* — the simultaneous presence of groups and tactics representing a dizzying diversity of moments and interests. This diversity is a strength, and movements working to seize state power are an important part of who we are.

The Zapatistas say that the privileged form of struggle during the Cold War was revolutionary nationalism — from Vietnam to South Africa to Cuba and Nicaragua to the Black Panthers and Young Lords.

In contrast, the movements we highlighted are globalist and autonomist. A painful lesson of many movements in the last few decades has been that state power is not enough to defend against global capital. Without the power to redraw economic and social reality, individual states can be isolated, bought off, undermined from the outside or invaded and destroyed. The ANC is a great example of this, as the film shows.

How did the attacks on September 11 transform the global anticapitalist movement?

We're still fighting over what the meaning of September 11 was. It ripped a hole in the narrative of what it means to be an American, what our place is in the world. The media tried to fill it with war, patriotism and violence. There's another possibility.

This could be a moment when we became a part of the global community, with a connection to the people around the world who've been living with extreme violence for a long time.

Elections and marches by themselves can't stop this war. The lesson of the massive February 15 demos was that the system can ignore global public opinion. Protest must be part of a broader movement that can make this war unworkable on the ground as well.

Since the Zapatista uprising in 1994, many of us tried to fit every struggle in the world into one template. Since 2001, not just the attacks in New York — but also the uprisings in Genoa and Argentina, it became difficult to maintain that analysis.

There's a crisis in power. The globalizers and the financial elites represented by the IMF are in a real conflict with the old, colonial-style imperialists like the neo-cons. How the world resistance deals with this is being figured out right now.

REVIEW



Agit-Propumentary

A visual poem with its New York premier set for the RNC, *The Fourth World War* brings home a reality of hope — that the forever war is less a 'clash of civilizations' than a global intifada

Things have gotten a lot more interesting after the end of history. Big Noise Films'

Rick Rowley and Jacquie Soohen (*This is What Democracy Looks Like*, 2000) traveled the world shooting startling, original footage of the popular revolts that have wiped the grin of triumph from the faces of the global elite. Hundreds of unarmed Zapatistas storm a Mexican army outpost — bringing the humbled soldiers to tears. Financially ruined Argentine professionals smash up ATMs along Buenos

Aires boulevards. Palestine resists total occupation against hopeless odds. New York City rejects Bush's war against the world even after September 11. In each discrete revolt, a common humanity bursts from the dull of the daily.

Even when it's not clear where the movement is going, you can see that it's not standing still. Narrated by incendiary artists Suheir Hammad and Michael Franti, the *Fourth World War* is not a documentary. It's a provocation, a challenge and the best cure for cynical chic I've ever seen. —JB

4WW opens for a limited engagement at the Anthology Film Archives to coincide with the RNC. For more information, bignoisefilms.com



ISIDRO AVILES and his mother Teresa

NEW YORKERS TALK BACK TO BUSH

LIVING JUST ENOUGH FOR THE

Theresa Aviles is a Bronx police clerk whose son, Isidro, died in prison during his seventh year of a 27-year Rockefeller drug law sentence.

My son was imprisoned for an alleged crack cocaine conspiracy. A man in prison set him up to get him some money for a lawyer by meeting up with another guy to make a deal. The guy turned out to be a federal agent, it turned out to be a conspiracy, and he was arrested.

We come from a poor family — we didn't have money to hire a decent attorney ... and I was really naive and dumb to drug laws in general, how they relate to people of color.

So Isidro was sentenced for 27 years in federal prison, and in the seventh year he got sick and died mysteriously. The illness was undiagnosed and untreated. When the death certificate came, it said "white male." I'm black and his father was Puerto Rican. You explain that.

If he had been poor and white, I think his sentence would have been the same. But if he had had money — he would have been out, no issue. It's about having the resources to work the system.

Isidro had two daughters, and one more on the way, when he was arrested. His oldest daughter was the most traumatized — at first we thought we would be able to get him out because he had no drug offenses, and we told her that, but as she grew older she realized that that wasn't the truth.

I blame it on the lawmakers — they're the one who really put these laws into place. I work for the police department, and I see a lot of things that I shouldn't talk about, but what I will say is that what happens depends on who you are and where you are — it has nothing to do with guilt and innocence.

If you believe this is about justice, you must be believing in the tooth fairy.

Doug Robinson is a resident of West Harlem who organized a community group, Friends of Morningside Park, to bring resources to his neighborhood's only green space.

I use the park to walk my dog every day, to interact with other people, to sit by the pond, enjoy the beauty of the pond — but also, just walking through the park, it's a magnificent park. And the beauty alone is worth the value of volunteering and fighting and advocating to bring resources to it, even if it's hard....

The park has suffered because, with the economic decline and redirection of resources in the city, parks that do not have an endowment and depend on public funding have suffered a great deal. So it has been extremely difficult trying to raise funds, and for next year's program events we don't have any funding.

Our funds have almost completely run out. Each year we have program events — an Easter egg hunt, Halloween, a summer concert series — and we're going to lose those kinds of events.

And the thing is, I'm so happy that Central Park has \$2 million toward the maintenance of that park, but little Morningside Park, 29.88 acres, has zero dollars. We need \$19 million just to rectify all the problems in the park, from the leak in the pond to the major erosion problems that are going on in the park.

This war over Central Park pits me between two things I believe in. I'm not a fan of George Bush's. But on the other hand, it took them \$20 million to restore that park. So many people use that lawn, and I would hate to see it destroyed. So I'm torn....

But \$20 million dollars — just think what we could do with that uptown! Our baseball field, our outgrowth and trees on the outcroppings on the trees on the wall on Morningside Drive ... so much could change.

Valerie DeBenedette has been a writer on health and medicine since the 1980s. Her partner, Bernie, is a New York newspaper journalist who has had a kidney transplant and relies on Medicare for his anti-rejection drugs.

The Medicare rules are written in a way that nobody understands them. There are really arcane rules about exactly how much you pay, what counts, what's on the approved formulary. Before the new rules, we paid close to \$4,000 or \$5,000 just on Bernie's copayments — you don't even want to know the real costs of the drugs, they're about \$40,000 a year for 14 different drugs — and we just didn't know what was going to happen now. So Bernie calls around, and nobody ... can tell us what's going on.

If I didn't have a sense of humor, I would have gone crazy. Bernie really did come close to a nervous breakdown. By Saturday, Dec. 8, Bernie was so obsessed with this, he was in tears. He couldn't stop crying. I ended up saying, okay, Hon, we have to go to the emergency room. Only with the help of a mental health therapist and our pastor could we calm him down at all. It was just a horrid scene, because at the same time you're fearing for someone's sanity, you yourself are thinking, "Okay, now what?"

We're just one family. But ... you have to remember that for each Medicare person you're talking about, you're also talking about the lost productivity of their children, wives and grandchildren, who have to be the caretakers.

Of course, the main reason this all happened was that the Republican Party wanted to say, "See, we're the party that got elderly people a drug benefit in Medicare" I have to get myself down to the RNC protests. I'm going to be going down on Saturday with a sign saying, "I'm a liberal Christian, so I forgive the religious right."

"If Mr. Bush were here in front of me, here's what I would say: You are an arrogant, egotistical, bible-toting liar, and if your war is an appropriate thing for us to be doing, put your daughters into the war..."



CARING US OFF THE S Four Weeks of an NYPD Psy-C

Over the past month, the New York Police Department (with help from the local media) has attempted to create an atmosphere of fear around the protests against the Republican National Convention.

JULY 12, 2004

"Fury At Anarchist Convention Threat," screams a *Daily News* headline. The entire article is based on an Internet post by an "anarchist" outlining how to disrupt the convention. The alleged post includes calls for protesters to cover themselves in gun powder to throw off bomb-sniffing dogs. No other paper reports on the threat. No one outside the *Daily News* or the NYPD claims to have ever seen the mysterious web posting.

July 28, 2004

The *New York Times* reports that the New York National Guard is being put on alert for possible deployment during the RNC.

August 13, 2004

Newsday reports on an internal NYPD guide to the conventions that warns that protesters may dress up like police officers and then beat up fellow protesters in order to fake police brutality. The police report also warns that protesters may use balloons as weapons: Balloons filled with metal shavings could be thrown at electrical lines, or frozen balloons could be thrown from tall buildings.

August 16, 2004

Mayor Michael Bloomberg suggests that First Amendment rights to free speech and free assembly are "privileges" that could be lost if abused. "People who avail themselves of the opportunity to express themselves ... they will not abuse that privilege," he declares. "Because if we start to abuse our privileges, then we lose them, and nobody wants that."

August 18,

WABC reveals that it begin putting 56 so-called 24-hour surveillance teams to the RNC. The NYPD officers and one supervisor each of the 56

—AS TOLD TO MAGGIE GRAM

REPUBLICANS ON SEVENTH AVENUE!

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

I think I'm hallucinating when I see six people tabling for the Bush-Cheney ticket on the non-bunker side of Madison Square Garden.

This is a bit like seeing Martians landing on Seventh Avenue. LaRouchians table, Jews for Jesus table, but Manhattan's Republicans are creatures of the boardroom, not the street. That's why they're building an enclosed bridge over Eighth Avenue to the media center in the Post Office, so the spin doctors won't have to mix with the riffraff.

They're real. One man wears a "Jews for Bush-Cheney" button. Doesn't he know that the main reasons the far right is pro-Israel are (1) to project American imperial power in the Middle East and (2) because they believe in this bizarre eschatology (that means "end-of-the-world theology," not "obsessed with shit") in which the Jews regaining the biblical lands is the prerequisite for Armageddon and the Second Coming – at which point all unconverted Hebrews will be cast into the lake of fire? "My wife's a liberal," he says. Then she can tell the schmuck he shouldn't side with Pharaoh.

A laminated flyer on the table advertises former mayor Ed Koch as a Democrat for Bush. Koch's smug mug has been appearing on ads telling New Yorkers to "make nice" to the Republicans. This from someone whose favorite epithet for people who disagreed with him was "wacko." Koch is best remembered for running the most corrupt municipal administration in the last 50 years. Black people hated him because he played Nixon to Giuliani's Reagan, building a white plutocrat-redneck coalition on the riff that liberals had coddled the militant, shiftless, and thuggish "element" for too long and it was time to take the city back. Tenants remember him for declaring, as rents for vacant apartments doubled and tripled in the '80s, that people who couldn't afford to live in Manhattan "should move."

Next to the Koch flyer is another one that asks, "Who would Osama vote for?" So I turn toward a woman who's wearing what looks like a Kerry button – but it's obviously a mock-Kerry button, because she's also wearing one that depicts a crossed-out pair of rubber flip-flops. For people who complain about "the politics of personal destruction," Republicans sure relish schoolyard insults. "Flip-flopper, flip-flopper, nyah nyah-nyah nyah-nyah."

"So who would Osama want me to vote for?" I ask her.

"President Bush," she says. I don't think she heard me right. Maybe I'm mumbling; I'm sick and spacey today. I'm also definitely wearing the wrong outfit for neutral conversation with Republicans. I'm on my way to the Underground Garage Festival on Randall's Island, so I look like a future resident of the Rock Rock Rock 'n' Roll Nursing Home, all in black with a snakeskin-print cap and "Loco Pro" T-shirt.

"Yes, I think Osama probably would want me to vote for Bush," I reply. "The Abu Ghraib torture pictures make great recruiting posters."

She looks at me like I don't exist. Presumably Republicans too know that the first rule of political tabling is to avoid getting bogged down in arguments with your ideological enemies.



Illustrations: Frank Reynoso

Edward Kent has been an associate professor of philosophy at Brooklyn College since 1970.

Many of our students are being threatened daily with deportation.

One of our more able students at Brooklyn College, whose family came from Bangladesh when she was four, was just deported. She's a graduate student, she's been in the United States since she was four years old – she's into, you know, rock and pizza. Her family had applied for refugee status when they arrived, but they were denied. So last year we fought tooth and nail to keep her here, but ultimately we were a week too late. She was finally dragged across the border.

At the university more generally, we've had tremendous delays in the naturalization process. It used to be a routine process, 25 dollars, we could do the fingerprinting right here at college, but now they're totally paranoid and it takes years. If you don't have citizen status, they say, you can't have education.

Of course, we should be allowed to meet in Central Park to protest the policies of those Republicans. People cannot go to the West Side Drive: there are no sanitary facilities down there, and it would be absolute chaos. Whether they grant permission or not, people will probably be assembled in Central Park – but it's very repressive kind of stuff. These things are happening to my students and they're not even allowed to protest about it.

Sue Niederer is the mother of Lt. Seth Dvorkin, a soldier in the U.S. Army who died in an explosion in Iraq in February 2004.

Seth was a happy-go-lucky, fun-loving, phenomenal human being with the world in front of him. He had just finished his

training when he went over there. He went up to Watertown, N.Y., on a Monday, and on a Tuesday they told him: "You're out of here, you're leaving for Iraq." It was a blow to everyone – even his commander, who was appalled that he would send a rookie – "wet behind the ears," he said – to Iraq.

But they said, well, he'll get on-the-job training. He sure got on-the-job training – it killed him.

His death has made a shambles of this family. Everybody is at a total loss. We were a family that was very united. We are no longer united. Seth was my universe – my buddy, my pal, and my best friend.... My daughter and my ex-husband – because of this and what the army created there are not speaking whatsoever. We are dissociated with each other.

I'm going to be in New York, I'm going to be protesting. Of course, there will be certain things I will be able to protest in, and there are certain things I won't be able to protest in because I just don't have it in me. I'll be there.

If Mr. Bush were here in front of me, here's what I would say: You are an arrogant, egotistical, bible-toting liar, and if your war is an appropriate thing for us to be doing, put your daughters into the war, and your congressmen and your legislators and all their children too. And ... be thankful for these people who enlist, don't disrespect them as you do by being a coward and not talking to their families. I wish you were where I am – and I don't wish ill on anyone. See how it feels.



Sue Niederer

STREETS? Ops Campaign

2004

the NYPD plans to call anarchy anarchists leading up PD is sending six pervisor to "shad protesters.

August 19, 2004

The NYPD invites the media to attend a police training exercise where officers battle with fake protesters (played by fellow cops). Images of the "protests" appear in most of the daily papers and nightly newscasts. Meanwhile, the NYPD also announces that it will become the first civilian force to use the military-designed Long Range Acoustic Device. The so-called non-lethal device can beam near-deafening sounds 300 yards or more to disperse crowds.

August 20, 2004

Attorney General John Ashcroft defends the FBI for interrogating at least two dozen activists across the country in the lead-up to the Republican National Convention protests. But three Congressmembers – Reps. John Conyers (D-MI), Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-VA) and Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) – accuse the FBI of engaging in "systematic political harassment and intimidation of legitimate antiwar protesters."

August 22, 2004

The *New York Times* reports that Republicans are seeking to turn any disruptions at the convention to their advantage "by portraying protests by even independent activists as Democratic-sanctioned displays of disrespect for a sitting president."

August 23, 2004

The *New York Post* cites an unnamed source who claims that former members of the Weather Underground are planning to "wreak havoc" during the convention. The source is quoted as saying: "These people are trained in kidnapping techniques, bombmaking and building improvised munitions. They're very bad people." The *Post* neglects to mention that the group had broken up by 1980.

IN BRIEF

IRAQI NATIONAL CONFERENCE PICKS PUPPET COUNCIL

Charged with electing an interim National Council, the Iraqi National Conference erupted in a maelstrom of controversy on Aug. 18. Slews of independent candidates and small-party contenders were removed from the voting lists or walked out of the conference in protest. A list of 81 candidates was approved without a vote and 19 former members of the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council were given automatic seats. Almost the entire new Council is composed of candidates from the five major parties: al-Daawa, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the Iraqi National Accord, the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

The 100-member council is to serve as the legislative arm of the Iraqi government until elections scheduled for January 2005.

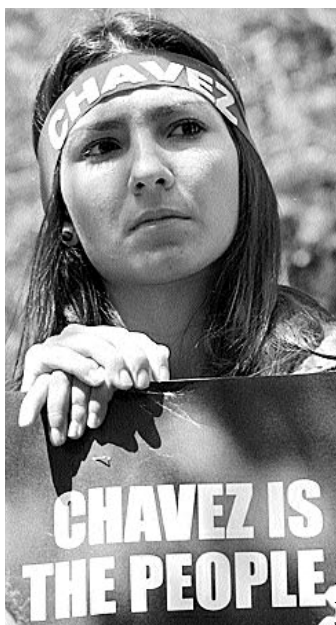
STRIKES AND PROTESTS ROCK DHAKA, BANGLADESH

Police shot rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse crowds in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka during protests and a two-day general strike following the attempted assassination of a top opposition leader. Reuters reports that more than 80 people were wounded Aug. 24 in clashes with police. Protesters smashed railway stations, removed tracks to stop trains and attacked government buildings.

Sheikh Hasina Wajed, a former prime minister and head of the opposition Awami League, escaped with only minor injuries, but the series of grenade blasts at an Aug. 21 political rally in Dhaka killed at least 18 other people. Awami general-secretary Abdul Jalil claimed that Sheikh Wajed was targeted "because she has been carrying the mantle of secular, democratic forces in Bangladesh." The clashes call into question Bangladesh's strong identity as a majority-Muslim democracy.

U.S. FLIP-FLOPS ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION

The State Department announced this week a more flexible interpretation of the Bush administration's position on construction of new Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. In a 2002 speech, Bush claimed that "we will continue to work with the government of Israel toward a settlement freeze, as is called for in the road map." But with the roadmap stalled and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to freeze settlement construction in Gaza under attack within his own party, a White House spokesman stayed neutral on Israel's announcement in recent days for new bids for the construction of about 1,500 housing units in the West Bank. Meanwhile, a report from the Associated Press last week pointed to the potential impact of absentee votes from the 185,000 American citizens living in Israel. In the 2000 election, 12,000 residents of Israel voted in Florida, where Bush won by 537 votes.



WHY HUGO CHAVEZ WON A LANDSLIDE VICTORY

By MEDEA BENJAMIN

When the rule of President Hugo Chavez was reaffirmed, the opposition was stunned. They obviously don't spend much time in the nation's poor neighborhoods.

I knew Chavez would win the referendum when I met Olivia Delfino in a poor Caracas barrio that our international delegation visited. Olivia came running out of her tiny house and grabbed my arm. "Tell the people of your country that we love Hugo Chavez," she insisted. She went on to tell me how her life had changed since he came to power. After living in the barrio for 40 years, she now had a formal title to her home and a bank loan to fix the leaking roof. Thanks to the Cuban dentists, for the first time in her life she was able to get her teeth fixed. And her daughter is in a training program to become a nurse's assistant.

Olivia dragged me over to a poster showing Chavez with a throng of followers and a list of Venezuela's new social programs that read: "The social programs are ours, let's defend them." Slowly and laboriously, she began reading the list of programs: literacy, health care, job training, land reform, subsidized food, small loans.

I asked her if she was just learning to read as part of the literacy program. That's when she started crying. "Can you imagine what it has meant to me, at 52 years old, to now have a chance to read?" she said. "It's transformed my life."

Walk through poor barrios in Venezuela and you'll hear the same stories over and over. The poor are not only recipients of these programs; they are running them. They're turning abandoned buildings into neighborhood centers, running community kitchens, volunteering to teach in the literacy programs and organizing neighborhood health brigades.

Infuriated by their loss of power, the elite accuse Chavez of using the social programs as a way to gain votes. In this, the opposition is right: providing people with free health care, education, small business loans and job training is certainly a good way to win the hearts and minds of the people.

From www.commondreams.org

VENEZUELA'S VICTORY

By MARK W. EISBROT

On a Caracas TV show before Venezuela's recall referendum, supporters of President Hugo Chavez picked up a six-foot-long baseball bat, taking up their leader's metaphor for the "home run" he would hit in the ballot. And on Sunday, Aug. 15, the bat was knocked out of the park, with voters choosing to keep their president by 58 to 42 percent. It's the third time that Chavez has won the popular vote by a large margin.

The result shows that an anti-poverty agenda can be an electoral success in a country where the majority of people are poor — as is true for most of Latin America. Millions of Venezuelans now have access to medical care, education, literacy programs, microcredit loans, and even some land that has been redistributed in rural areas.

These programs, as well as a sense of political inclusion among the country's impoverished majority, were a huge factor in this election. Rising oil prices have made it easier for the government to share Venezuela's oil wealth with the poor. But many Latin American countries could afford similar improvements in the lives of poor people, if they made it a priority.

Of course social programs are not sustainable if the economy does not grow, and that has been the number-one economic problem in Latin America for the past quarter-century. That is why Venezuela is among

several countries where left-wing or populist candidates have won elections (Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador) or come very close (Bolivia) in the last few years. A long-term, unprecedented economic failure is driving these political developments.

Between 1960 and 1979 the region grew by 80 percent per capita, allowing for improvement in overall living standards despite the worst income inequality in the world. Between 1980 and 1999, it grew by only 11 percent, and for the first five years of this decade, an abysmal 1 percent.

And since most of the post-1980s economic reforms — liberalization of trade and investment flows, privatization, high interest rates and tight fiscal policies, even during recessions — have carried a "made in the USA" label, it's not surprising that the political revolt in Latin America has been against Washington's influence and neo-liberal economic policies.

So it is a mistake to try and demonize or isolate Chavez. He is only the most vocal representative of a broad swath of leaders and movements with the same view.

And despite the efforts of U.S. officials such as Roger Noriega and Otto Reich to paint Venezuela as another Cuba, the country is as free and democratic as any in Latin America — as the world witnessed once again in this latest vote.

From www.cepr.net (Center for Economic and Policy Research)

THE 'NEGRO E INDIO' PRESIDENT

By GREG PALAST

There's so much BS about Venezuela that I may be violating some rule of U.S. journalism by providing some facts. Let's begin with this: 77 percent of Venezuela's farmland is owned by 3 percent of the population, the 'hacendados.'

I met one of these farm lords in Caracas at an anti-Chavez protest march. Oddest demonstration I've ever seen: frosted blondes in high heels clutching designer bags, screeching, "Chavez — dic-ta-dor!" The plantation owner griped about the "socialismo" of Chavez, then jumped into his Jaguar convertible.

That week, Chavez himself handed me a copy of the "socialist" manifesto, a new law passed by Venezuela's Congress that gave land to the landless. The law transferred only fields from the giant haciendas that had been left unused and abandoned.

This land reform was promoted by Kennedy in the 1960s. Venezuela's dictator of the time agreed to hand out land, but forgot to give peasants title to their property.

But Chavez won't forget, because the mirror reminds him. What the affable president sees in his reflection, beyond the ribbons of office, is a "negro e indio" — a "Black and Indian" man, dark as a cola nut, same as the landless and, until now, the hopeless. For the first time in Venezuela's history, the 80 percent Black-Indian population elected a man with skin darker than the man in the Jaguar.

So why, with a huge majority of the electorate behind him, is Chavez in hot water with our democracy-promoting White House?

Maybe it's the oil. Venezuela has lots of it. It's not Chavez's presidency of Venezuela that drives the White House bananas, it was his presidency of OPEC. While in control of the OPEC secretariat, Chavez cut a 'Goldilocks' deal with Bill Clinton on the price of oil. The price would be not too low, not too high; just right, kept between \$20 and \$30 a barrel.

But Dick Cheney does not like Clinton nor Chavez nor their band, and what seems to have gotten our Veep's knickers in a twist is who keeps the loot. Chavez had his Congress pass an oil law that changes the split. Right now, the majors — like PhillipsConoco — keep 84 percent of the proceeds of the sale of Venezuela oil; the nation gets only 16 percent.

Chavez wanted to double his Treasury's take to 30 percent. And for good reason. Landless peasants have, over decades, drifted into Venezuela's cities, building million-person ghettos of cardboard shacks and open sewers. Chavez promised to do something about that. Suddenly, Chavez became Cheney's enemy.

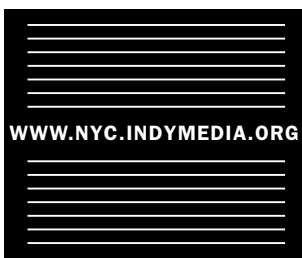
So began the Bush-Cheney campaign to "Floridate" the Venezuela electorate. Secret contracts were awarded by Homeland Security spooks to steal official Venezuela voter lists. Cash passed discreetly from the U.S. taxpayer, via the so-called "Endowment for Democracy," to the Chavez-haters running the "recall."

A brilliant campaign of placing stories about Chavez's supposed unpopularity and "dictatorial" manner seized U.S. news and op-ed pages, from the *San Francisco Chronicle* to the *New York Times*.

But some facts can't be smothered in propaganda ink. While George Bush can appoint the government of Iraq and call it "sovereign," the government of Venezuela is appointed by its people. And the fact is that most people in this slum-choked land don't drive Jaguars or have their hair tinted in Miami. Most look in the mirror and see someone "negro e indio," as dark as their President Hugo.

Today, the landless and homeless voted their hopes, knowing that their man may not, against the armed axis of local oligarchs and Dick Cheney, succeed. But they are convinced he will never forget them.

From www.gregpalast.com



Oil (regime) Change

By A.K. GUPTA

If one element could encapsulate the disastrous occupation of Iraq, it would be the beleaguered nation's oil infrastructure. It's bombed so frequently that there is a website devoted to tracking the attacks (www.iags.org/iraqpipelinewatch.htm). Since June 2003 there have been 98 documented attacks, with half of those occurring in the last four months alone.

Oil was central to the war, if you'll recall. President Bush assured us that Iraq's oil wealth would pay for the occupation. Pentagon hawks added that a liberated Iraq would be pumping so much oil by now we could kiss the Saudis good-bye.

On the eve of U.S. invasion, Saddam Hussein's Iraq was exporting 2.2 million barrels a day despite years of almost daily bombing and a severe sanctions regime that banned virtually all new industrial equipment and spare parts.

Now, after months of war and occupation, Iraq is exporting barely a million barrels a day and can't meet its own energy needs. Its pipeline to Turkey has been shut since the invasion by repeated bombings. The insurgency is so widespread that reconstruction has been abandoned.

The occupation is such a mess that Iraq's 2004 budget included \$2.2 billion to import fuels—about 10 percent of the nation's economic output. Halliburton was tasked to do the importing, and charged Uncle Sam a high-octane \$2.68 per gallon. After public outcry over price-gouging, the Pentagon assumed control of importing fuels. With incomes in Iraq at a few dollars a day, the imported fuel is sold to the public for pennies.

Now picture the situation. On the one hand is 50 percent unemployment in Iraq. On the other is the subsidized fuel. The result, reports the *New York Times*, is a network of fuel smugglers "making tidy profits by buying highly subsidized gasoline in Iraq and reselling it in Jordan at more than 10 times their cost."

At least we're providing Iraqis with jobs of some sort. After it became apparent that oil revenues were lacking, Congress approved \$18.4 billion last year for rebuilding, but only \$600 million of that has been spent. U.S. corporations, though, have pocketed more than \$2 billion in Iraqi oil money.

Corruption appears to be endemic in Iraq. At least \$8.8 billion in oil funds controlled by U.S. authorities can't be accounted for. A U.N. audit released in July found thousands of "ghost employees" in Iraqi ministries controlled by the U.S. In one case, according to MSNBC, "8,206 guards were listed on a payroll, but only 603 people were doing the work."

This is "liberated" Iraq, where no one talks of freedom and democracy anymore. Prime Minister Ayad Allawi was appointed by the U.S. and the only positive comment the media can muster is that he's a "strongman." The Pentagon has doled out billions for Iraqi security forces, but even its own generals admit that those who haven't joined the resistance or deserted are useless.

The brass has been saying for months that the U.S. is losing the war. After the first Shiite uprising in April, U.S. Army Col. Paul Hughes likened the Iraq occupation to the Vietnam War.

He told the *Washington Post*, "Here I am, 30 years later, thinking we will win every fight and lose the war, because we don't understand the war we're in."

Actually the Iraqis are liberating themselves—from the United States. *Time* magazine noted recently, "U.S. forces have abdicated power in Fallujah, been chased out of Ramadi and Samarra, and are scrambling to keep hold of Baqubah, Tikrit and Mosul. Even in Baghdad, gunmen have turned areas of the capital into deadly no-go zones."

Add to that much of southern Iraq. Examining how the most recent Shiite uprising began, the *New York Times* noted in a revealing account on Aug. 17 that Marine officers in Najaf, "acting without the approval of the Pentagon or senior Iraqi officials," provoked the fighting. The *Times* added that "the sequence of events was strikingly reminiscent of the battle of Fallujah in April."

One of those "strikingly reminiscent" events is the desertion of Iraqi troops, which appears to be widespread. A commander of a unit of 140 men in Baghdad said that 38 of his men had quit or were on leave because of death threats issued to them for collaborating with U.S. forces. Capt. Saeed Majeed told reporter Hannah Allam, "If they ask me to fight in Najaf under an Iraqi authority, I might go. But let's be real—it's not Iraqis who are in command right now."

Instead, the Marines Corps appears to be running U.S. foreign policy in the most volatile region in the world. Their gung-ho attitude has now sparked general uprisings among both the Sunnis and the Shiites. As for who approved the idea to break the truce with Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, an unnamed official says U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte "decided to pursue the case."

"One result," the *Times* account states, "was a domino effect, with the fighting in Najaf soon replicated in more than half a dozen cities and towns across southern Iraq that are Mahdi Army strongholds, including the Baghdad slum of Sadr City, Diwaniya, Kut, Al Hayy, Nasiriya, Amara and Basra."

The U.S. has found itself in a political conflict, where its overwhelming military superiority is now counterproductive. Maj. Gen. Pete Chiarelli, who commands the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad, observes, "We're really good at combat operations, killing and breaking things... But if all I am doing is this, I will make more enemies than I kill."

As in Fallujah, the U.S. is in a lose-lose situation in Najaf. While the world is focused on the Imam Ali Shrine, wondering whether the Pentagon will risk a popular explosion by assaulting al-Sadr's militia holding the venerated compound, it has already destroyed part of the historically significant Maytham Mosque in the nearby city of Kufa, as well as much of the sacred "Valley of Peace" cemetery that adjoins the Najaf shrine.

Whatever happens in Najaf, the war is already lost. But many opponents of the Iraq war are falling into Vietnam-era traps: that we can't just withdraw for fear of letting the country fall into chaos and that we need "peace with honor." The fact is, Iraq is in chaos precisely because of our intervention, and the only honorable course of action is to bring the troops home immediately. That is the only realistic solution.



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WBAI contingent to historic Feb. 15, 2003 March on Washington rally. Photo credit: Jay Smooth

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By TIM SPARKMAN

Yet another unique voice has added itself to the political free-for-all that is the southwest corner of Union Square. The satirical "Communists for Kerry" debuted Aug. 14, blaring the Soviet national anthem from a portable tape deck and pleading with New Yorkers to remember in November that no one will socialize the U.S. like John Kerry.



'Commies for Kerry'

The Right's Answer to 'Billionaires for Bush'

Onlookers were by turns confused, amused and obviously contemplating violence, as the sarcastic message of these Bush supporters sparked invectives and spread arguments across the crowd. The group's beaming leader, Che Guevara, commented, "The extremist leftists are nicer to us than the 20-something liberal-minded" types. The latter had laid into the group with accusations that their stunt was "a threat to the country" that would deceive "the average, dumb American."

Amid the mob's profane appeals to common sense, Ivan "Lenin" calmly explained himself. "I want people who are going to vote for Kerry just because they hate Bush to pay attention to who they're voting for," Ivan said. "It's the wrong way to approach electing somebody."

Donning an array of commie gear, the Communists for Kerry carried posters to warn passersby of Kerry's supposedly pinko record. The "General Secretary," dressed like Fidel Castro, stuffed Band-Aids into the hands of onlookers and said, "Here, free health care."

Communists for Kerry make a number of bizarre claims. They insist that Kerry met with North Vietnamese government representatives

in Paris in the early '70s to coordinate efforts against the war, and that he aided the Sandinistas while in the Senate. Their signs read, "Red Stars Above His Purple Hearts" and "Stop the Economic Boom Created By George W. Bush."

Dressed in a tight suit and sporting a goatee and a partially shaven head, Ivan lamented, "It never crosses the Left's mind that someone in their right mind could disagree with them politically."

Geoffrey Blank, coordinator of No Police State, dismissed the group. "It's a shtick," he said. "They've got nothing to say. They just dis free health care."

Blank, who wore a Soviet party pin on his lapel, was at the Free Speech Speak-Out his group hosts three times a week in Union Square to challenge the city's no-permit process and stimulate free political expression. The Communists for Kerry made their debut that Saturday about 20 feet from the Speak-Out's open forum.

"They're probably just upper-middle-class people afraid of the government taxing them a bit," Blank added.

"We invited them to talk," said Freddy Bastone, who was at the square for the Speak-Out and describes himself as an

"actual, real communist."

Ivan, who had taken a turn with the forum's bullhorn, said, "I can talk. I just wasn't going to give an hour-long speech."

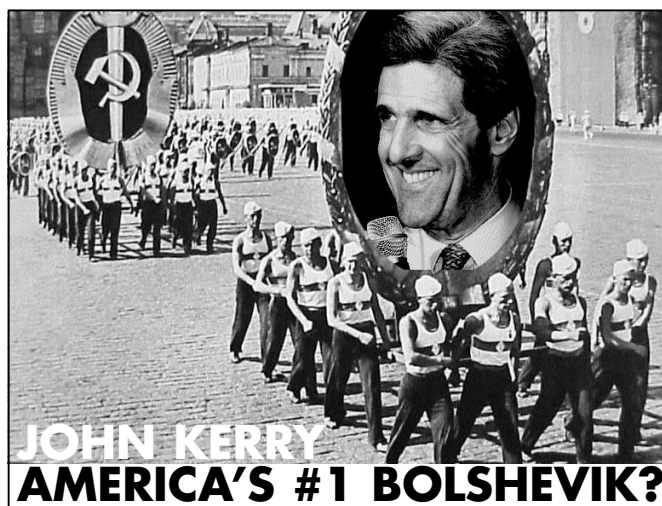
"John Kerry is not a communist, just a watered-down socialist," explained Oleg, another member of Communists for Kerry. Reminiscing about growing up in the Soviet Union, Oleg commented that Kerry's socialist tendencies, like his talk of universal health care, arise from "cynical populism rather than some consistent set of ideals."

The politburo members are also incensed by what they see as the Left's insulting characterizations of Bush. "I will never paint a picture of John Kerry covered in blood, biting the head off a baby," promised Che. Although their website features lowbrow shots at Kerry, including a piece that is literally toilet humor, the Communists for Kerry mostly stick to their relatively clean message.

"We're trying to prove that conservatives have a sense of humor, too," said Che.

Indeed, these conservatives do. Your correspondent ran out of cigarettes halfway through the interview and asked Oleg if he could spare a smoke.

"Sure," he grimaced. "We're communists."



"Communists for Kerry" seem to think so, while others disagree. Take a look at the facts and decide for yourself.

- Kerry's estimated net worth ranges from \$164 million to \$211 million, while the net worth of his wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, is usually estimated at half a billion.
- While at the not-quite-proletarian school of Yale, Kerry was a member of Skull and Bones, the super-secret, super-elite fraternity of America's ruling class.
- As one of the key platforms in his much-ballyhooed tax plan, Kerry calls for a 5 percent cut in corporate taxes, all the while arguing that he'll continue to follow the Bill Clinton philosophy of "smaller government."
- Kerry supports NAFTA and the war in Iraq, and opposes gay marriage.

WHERE ART MEETS POLITICS UN-CONVENTIONAL THEATER

BY F. TIMOTHY MARTIN

It's late on a Thursday night in Midtown and a dozen or so actors from the Subjective Theatre Company are busy rehearsing for their upcoming show, *The White Plague*, at the UnConvention theater festival. It's hot, and the whir of a vacuum cleaner outside the rehearsal space lets everyone know that it's getting close to closing time.

Yet the group acts on. "Long live the Marshal!" they shout repeatedly and emphatically, all the while with their hands raised in a mock salute to their Nazi-like leader. The Marshal is giving them plenty of reason to get excited. He rails on about preemptive strikes, justice and God's will. It's obvious the performance is a study on Hitler, but equally obvious is the show's relevance to contemporary politics.

Written in 1936, Karel Capek's *The White Plague* gave audiences in Czechoslovakia something to think about two years before Nazi Germany invaded their country. Subjective Theatre's revival of the play during the Republican National Convention will give audiences in America something to think about two years after the invasion of Iraq.

After rehearsal, director and producer Zach Mannheimer finds time to discuss the production. "This play says there will always be leaders and followers, but it's important for people to voice their opinions," he says. "We're trying to say that living in a democracy is a much better place than a dictatorship."

Mannheimer and his colleagues are taking the message seriously. They've constructed several devices for encouraging audience participation during the show. Ushers will separate theater-goers who arrive together. There are no programs for people to stare at before the show. Instead, the company hopes the audience will mingle and discuss politics. Mannheimer has even added the possibility for an alternative ending based on audience decision.

The goal of political theater, they say, is to engage an audi-

ence. Mannheimer promises to stop the show and begin a dialogue with audience members if they initiate some sort of reaction.

"Theater is supposed to create discourse," he says. "If the audience reacts, why keep going? We'll stop and capitalize on what just happened. What's going on in the theater is much more interesting than what's happening onstage."

The Subjective Theatre Company is joining five other productions as part of the UnConvention festival, lasting from Aug. 27 to Sept. 11. The six companies met each other at Community Dish, a loose consortium of several dozen off-off-Broadway theater companies that share a vision to transform community theater.

Members argue that the current nonprofit funding system is broken. They point out that more 1,000 theater companies exist in NYC, but only a few dozen receive funding. Their goal is to raise enough money through a private lottery system and matching federal grants to support the transport of these companies to other cities and towns across the nation. British Pub Theater and the defunct Federal Theater Project, which existed in the 1930s as part of the Works Progress Administration, are held up as models of how theater should work in America.

"In the 1930s, Federal Theater was able to open the same show in 19 cities on the same night," Mannheimer says. "Now there's no audience in off-off-Broadway. It's mostly family and friends."

But Subjective Theatre and other Community Dish groups hope to inspire a revolution in community theater.

"We hate the term 'off-off-Broadway,'" Mannheimer says, "because it implies we want to get to Broadway — and we don't." Instead, Subjective Theatre has plans to move to Brooklyn for a few years, build up experience and a reputation, then move to a town with more of a need for community theater.



It's a dream that obviously impassions the 26-year-old director. Despite his age, his face projects the maturity and conviction necessary to realize his commitments. But bringing the arts to communities across the country is only one aspect of Subjective Theatre's plans. They've partnered with Music for America, an activist group from California with which they're planning a university tour across the country next fall. The tour will include performances from a variety of theater groups and musicians. They also plan to hold discussion panels and invite local politicians to talk.

"Lots of people don't know their local politicians. Part of this process is to invite them. We want to marry the worlds of arts and politics. If we're really going to change things, we have to do it the way the Constitution allows us. Protest alone doesn't do it. This is a beginning for a new Left by people who want to make a difference rather than just talk about it."

FBI QUESTIONING, SURVEILLANCE AND RAIDS

BY MIKE BURKE

If you believe John Ashcroft, the FBI showed up on the front porch of Sarah Bardwell on July 22 to "support" and "enrich" freedom.

The four agents came to the house of this American Friends Service Committee intern in Denver. For 25 minutes they questioned her and her three housemates about their plans for the upcoming political conventions taking place more than 2,000 miles away.

Meanwhile, in Ashcroft's home state of Missouri, FBI agents showed up at the home of the parents of a young activist in Kirksville.

FBI agents were also tracking down activists in Lawrence, Kansas, New York, Boston and other communities in the days before the start of the Democratic National Convention.

Here in New York, the NYPD has openly admitted that it has infiltrated activist groups planning to stage protests during the convention.

The department has also taken the extraordinary measure of identifying 56 protesters around the country and assigning six officers and one supervisor to carry out 24-hour surveillance of each one. (Based on some estimates, the NYPD may have more agents tracking would-be protesters than the military has hunting full-time for Osama Bin Laden.)

In addition to the surveillance, the NYPD has carried out a series of controversial raids targeting New York political groups.

On Aug. 13, a multi-agency task force shut down a NYC Indymedia video team benefit party at the Brooklyn nightclub Volume. Nine months earlier the NYPD raided a gathering of the group Anarchist People of Color. Police arrived in 25 vehicles and attacked partygoers with pepper spray and nightsticks. Eight members of the group ended up arrested.

In every case law enforcement claims politics played no role in their actions. The FBI has defended its questioning by claiming it was trying to fend off potential violence at the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. At the Indymedia party, police cited building-code violations. The NYPD justified the APOC raid by claiming a partygoer had violated the city's open-container law.

On Aug. 17, Ashcroft defended the widespread FBI questioning. He said, "We simply believe it to be an outrageous distortion to suggest that any interviews we conducted were designed to thwart freedom. The interviews we conducted were designed to support freedom, to enrich it, to make sure it was not interrupted or otherwise disrupted by violent criminal terrorist activities."

But not all in Washington trust Ashcroft's claim.

Rep. John Conyers, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, charged that the FBI "appears to be engaged in systematic political harassment and intimidation of legitimate antiwar protesters."



What should you do if the FBI comes knocking?

What should you do when the Feebs come knocking? Are you required to answer questions asked by law enforcement officials?

As the *New York Times* reported on Monday, August 16, the FBI is mounting "an aggressive effort" to question political activists around the country who are intending to protest against the DNC and the RNC. According to the *Times*, dozens of people in six states have been asked by FBI agents whether they were planning violence or other disruptions; did they know anyone who was; and did they realize it was a crime to withhold such information?

You do not have to speak to the FBI or the police! It is not a crime to refuse to provide information in your possession — even if you do know of someone's intentions to break the law — unless you are subpoenaed in a law enforcement investigation. And it is a blatant misstatement of the law and an obvious attempt to intimidate activists to imply that it is illegal to withhold such information from agents who simply show up at your door.

However, it is a federal offense to make a false statement to an FBI agent. By far and away, the best advice is: Don't talk to the FBI!

—By the NYC Mass Defense Committee of the National Lawyers Guild



ILLUSTRATIONS: LEAH JOHNSON

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Antiwar Profiteering

By NEELA GHOSHAL

When forty-something Brooklynite Wat Stearns attended the annual Socialist Scholars Conference in April 2002, he emerged inspired to take on the Bush regime by any means necessary – and found himself venturing into the capitalist realm of T-shirt production.

That summer, Stearns printed up batches of his first two T-shirts under the label "AlternaTees." He began to hawk his popular "No War in Iraq" shirts in the streets; the wordier "Use It or Lose It – Politicize Now" tee, on the other hand, was an "abysmal non-seller."

Two years and one worldwide antiwar movement later, products bashing the Bush administration and its policies have boomed into a big business.

The products range from a four-foot-tall "BushBops" punching bag to several independently developed decks of playing cards depicting Bush and 52 of his closest cronies; from a "Babes Against Bush" calendar that verges on soft porn to Stearns' most successful new tank top, which proclaims, "My Bush Would Make a Better President." (A counterpart for men declares, "My Dick Would Make a Better Vice President.")

Reactions to the Bush-bashing gear have been mixed, even on the left. A recent article by Naomi Klein in the *Guardian* decries a "Bush in a Box" gag gift her father received as emblematic of the dumbing-down of the Left. The cardboard Bush cutout featured "the usual tired Bush-isms [like] 'They underestimated me,'" writes Klein, describing the gift as "standard-issue Bush-bashing schlock, on sale at Wal-Mart, made in Malaysia." If we want to accomplish real change, Klein says, we must "put away the fridge magnets and Bush gags and get serious."

But many of the entrepreneurs taking on Bush via T-shirts and novelty items are strictly grassroots operations, made up of individuals or small groups of friends who hope to wake up the public with their humorous, accessible political messages.

One group that stormed onto the scene this spring was Axis of Eve, founded by four young women who developed the idea of anti-Bush underwear, with messages centered around the provocative theme of "exposing Bush."

"We started by forwarding around our idea to our whole cohort of friends. We listed, like, 15 different slogans and asked people to vote," says Tasha Eve, a 33-year-old anthropologist who, like the other "Eves," refuses to use her real last name in conjunction with Axis activities. "We negotiated a Panty Pledge, in which people said, 'I pledge to buy panties if and when you make them.'"

With potential buyers lined up, the women went to work, printing slogans including "Expose Bush," "Cream Bush," "Give Bush the Finger," "Drill Bush Not Oil," and "Lick

Bush" on brightly colored, sweatshop-free panties from American Apparel. They made their debut at the April 25 March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C.

"We went down on an Axis of Eve bus with 56 women," says Tasha. "Thirty-five to forty of them had not been planning to go to the march, but got so excited about the panties and the project that they wanted to go." The bulk of their delegation consisted of "high school and college women, many of whom had never voted before."

At the march, the women flashed their underwear to the crowds and sold panties by the dozens. "[The Panty Campaign] has a kindling effect in terms of getting people involved politically," says Tasha. "The brazenness of it gives people a little spark of hope."

A similar group of young women in Portland, Oregon, created T-shirts with an alternative message. Their "Abstinence Tour 2004" revolves around T-shirts that read, on the front, "Practice Abstinence: No Bush, No Dick in 2004."

Like Axis of Eve, Luzier and her friends got the word out via e-mail and a smart, humorous website.

"Our main goal is to raise awareness. We have a register-to-vote button on the website," says Luzier, a 33-year-old fish biologist who initiated the Abstinence Campaign with two coworkers.

Both groups have received hate mail from conservatives, says Luzier, "ranging from one word – 'losers' – to page-long diatribes." Some members of Axis of Eve have also come under fire – in some cases, says Tasha, from "strong liberal women.... I think they don't see the humor in it and aren't clued in to the need to use humor and sexiness and anything we can to get young women engaged."

Grassroots anti-Bush entrepreneurs have mixed feelings about John Kerry as the alternative to Bush. While the Abstinence Tour promotes itself as solidly Democratic, donating its proceeds to organizations like MoveOn.org and Air America, and Axis of Eve offers a "My Cherry for Kerry" panty for first-time voters, AlternaTees has shied away from openly pro-Kerry T-shirts.

Both AlternaTees and Axis of Eve plan to have a strong presence at the upcoming Republican National Convention protests. Look out for them in the crowds – and keep an eye out for a 200-woman-strong "panty flashing," in which Axis of Eve members and friends will attempt to expose Bush once and for all.



AXIS OF EVE: At left, a member of Axis of Eve demonstrates the existence of weapons of mass seduction. At right, panties sell like creamcakes at the D.C. March for Women's Lives.
PHOTO: AXIS OF EVE

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